THE Reconstructionist

Vol. IX. June 11, 1943 Sivan 8, 5703 No. 9.

EDITORIALS
- *A Nation in the Remaking*
- *Responsibility of Jews in Public Life*
- *Sniping at Community Effort in Jewish Education*

A PEN PORTRAIT OF PERETZ SMOLENSKIN
By Grace Goldin

PERETZ SMOLENSKIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO JEWISH THOUGHT
By David Polish

HEROIC RELIGION
By Edward T. Sandrow

BOOK NOTES
By Mordecai M. Kaplan

REALITIES AND VALUES

CORRESPONDENCE

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

RECONSTRUCTIONIST LITERATURE OFFERED BY THE JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST FOUNDATION:

BOOKS

JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION, by Mordecai M. Kaplan, the basic text of the Reconstructionist philosophy. (Out of print.)

JUDAISM IN TRANSITION, by Mordecai M. Kaplan $1.50

THE MEANING OF GOD IN MODERN JEWISH RELIGION, by Mordecai M. Kaplan 2.75

JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST PAPERS, ed. by M. M. Kaplan, a selection of articles and editorials from *The Reconstructionist* 2.00

THE FUTURE OF JUDAISM IN AMERICA, by Eugene Kohn 1.25

THE MAKING OF THE MODERN JEW, by Milton Steinberg 2.50

CREATIVE JUDAISM, by Ira Eisenstein, a popular presentation of *Judaism As A Civilization* 1.25

WHAT WE MEAN BY RELIGION, by Ira Eisenstein, a popular presentation of *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* 1.25

JUDAISM IN A CHANGING CIVILIZATION, by Samuel Dinin 1.25

SHIR HADASH, Supplementary Readings and Prayers for the High Holidays, edited by Eugene Kohn ..... .50

THE NEW HAGGADAH, edited by Mordecai M. Kaplan, Eugene Kohn, and Ira Eisenstein ..... .75

PAMPHLETS

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST PLATFORM.

TO BE OF NOT TO BE A JEW, by Milton Steinberg.

TOWARD A GUIDE FOR JEWISH RITUAL USAGE.

THE RECONSTRCTIONIST VIEWPOINT, by Mordeclai M. Kaplan.

THE MEANING OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM, by Mordecai M. Kaplan.

ZIONISM—(two articles)

Zionism and the New Opposition, *by Milton Steinberg.*
Reconstructionism and Zionism, *by Ira Eisenstein.*

Do you want to be placed on our mailing list to receive a copy of STUDY AIDS?

STUDY AIDS is prepared in connection with each issue of the magazine, and mailed to you bi-weekly. The contents include:

Questions, references and topics for discussion based on one editorial and one article in the current issue. These aids are intended as a guide for use in adult study groups, and are available without cost for this purpose.

To obtain Reconstructionist literature, or further information regarding the Jewish Reconstructionist Movement, apply to

THE JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST FOUNDATION
15 West Eighty-Sixth Street, New York.
Telephone: SChuyler 4-7000

THE Reconstructionist

Vol. IX. June 11, 1943 Sivan 8, 5703 No. 9.

EDITORIALS

A NATION IN THE REMAKING

SHABUOT may be said to be at present a festival in search of a meaning. Of course, for those Jews who still accept the traditional belief in the Torah's version of its own origin and the method of its revelation to Israel, Shabuot continues to be *zeman mattan toratenu,* the anniversary of the giving of the Torah. But for those who have ceased to believe in the *traditional* account of revelation, Shabuot has lost its original significance, and no adequate substitute has taken its place. To be sure, Reform Judaism has made Shabuot the occasion for the Confirmation service. In doing so, it has retained the association of the holiday with the Torah. But the important question still remains: What is the meaning of Torah for our day? What shall Confirmation mean to those who are "confirmed?"

Since, to those who accept the historical approach to the Torah, the Scriptures in their present form were formulated after Israel had become a nation and are consequently not regarded as having been presented to Israel while it was a nation in the making, the festival requires reinterpretation. In such a reinterpretation, Shabuot must figure as the symbol of an idea concerning Torah rather than as the commemoration of an event involving Torah. That idea should be that the nationhood of the Jewish people is the product, not of blood kinship, nor of mere territorial concentration, but of a civilization. Furthermore, Torah should convey the idea that such a civilization is not merely that which a people happens to develop through the play of historical forces, but one which is consciously cherished as a means of helping the members of the nation to attain life abundant.

The days which are recalled on Shabuot were those spent in the wilderness. They represent the time when Israel was in the process of becoming a nation. The recollection of those days, therefore, should help us to understand what was the main factor contributing to Israel's ultimate realization of nationhood. Especially today are we in need of recalling those early days in the wilderness, because, at the present time, we Jews find ourselves once again in the wilderness, this time as a nation in the process of *remaking.* The cataclysmic effects of Emancipaton and of the tragic consequences following upon it have shaken the very foundations of our existence as a group. Having emerged from the Egypt

of the ghetto, we have not yet found ourselves in the modern world.

Now is the time for us to bear in mind what, in the past, was the most important factor in the making of the nation, so that we may be guided in the difficult and subtle task of our remaking. The festival of Shabuot thus becomes particularly significant, and its message should now stand us in good stead. It should remind us that neither blood kinship nor mere territory can effect our rebirth, but only the cultivation of a common civilization. The "promised land" is certainly indispensable for our survival as a people, but we must not forget that Jews look forward to living in the diaspora for the indefinite future, and an over-all concept of Judaism is required under which can be subsumed both the center in Palestine and the periphery of far-flung communities. A common civilization, expressing itself in language, law, traditions, mores, art and religion is broad enough, and yet unifying enough to constitute the basis for Israel reborn. "Torah," interpreted in this way, can be the potent force to effect our remaking.

And it is that interpretation of Torah with which Shabuot should henceforth be identified. If that is done, Shabuot will cease to be a festival in search of a meaning.

RESPONSIBILITY OF JEWS IN PUBLIC LIFE

CONGRESSMAN SOL BLOOM'S defense of the Bermuda Conference before a HIAS meeting calls for earnest consideration of the responsibilities of Jews in public office to and for their fellow-Jews. True, Congressman Bloom was chosen as a member of the three-man delegation not because he was a Jew but because he was chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Nevertheless Congressman Bloom *is* a Jew and is known to be one. It is presumed by his colleagues that he is acquainted with the needs of his people and their opinions on public issues. The fact of his participation in the Bermuda Conference has been adduced as evidence that the Jews were represented in that body. When, therefore, he says that *as a Jew* he is thoroughly satisfied with the results of the Bermuda Conference, he tacitly admits that, although technically he did not represent the Jewish people, he regards himself as a responsible member of the Jewish community. He has, moreover, on more than one occasion in the past candidly given voice in Congress to Jewish sentiments, especially on questions of immigration.

But, by the same token, the Jewish community is justified in criticizing his acquiescence in the program of the Bermuda Conference, which not only took no effective steps to solve the problem of the Jews in Nazi-occupied countries, but accepted as axiomatic the appeasement policy of the British White Paper and the isolationism of existing American immigration laws. Nor can Congressman Bloom justly seek exemption from criticism by complaining, as he did at the HIAS meeting, that he got no constructive suggestions from Jews, only negative criticism. Many Jewish organizations prepared elaborate memoranda on the subject and submitted them to influential men in the State Department and other branches of our government. It is almost inconceivable that they should not have been sent to Congressman Bloom himself, in view of his strategic position in the government. What is more likely is that they were sent to him but that, in view of the great mass of mail which he no doubt receives, he did not give them close attention.

We are not interested in castigating Congressman Bloom. He has, on the whole, shown a greater awareness of his Jewish responsibilities than most Jews in

public life. We bring up the issue, however, to point a general moral. Jews in Congress have mostly been chosen from constituencies that included large masses of Jews. They were chosen because they were deemed better qualified than other individuals to understand and interpret the real needs of their Jewish as well as of their Gentile constituents. Representative government implies a continuous contact between the representatives of the people and the electorate that put them into power. We do not want Jews to view every question from a Jewish angle. We do not want them to be partisan in favoring Jewish interests to the detriment of the interests of other elements in the population. We want them to be straight; but we do not want them to bend backward in their effort to be straight. Jews are also human beings and American citizens and their legitimate interests are entitled to consideration as are those of other groups. A Jew in public life is *ipso facto,* whether he wishes to be or not, a representative of the Jewish community. That imposes responsibilities upon him. And not the least of those responsibilities is the duty of keeping himself informed about what Jews think and how Jews feel concerning matters that affect them as Jews.

SNIPING AT COMMUNITY EFFORT IN JEWISH EDUCATION

JEWISH education can have no future in this country unless it becomes a problem for the entire community, and not merely for each particular congregation, school board or similar organization doing Jewish educational work. Hitherto each institution has proceeded by itself without reference to other educational efforts in the Jewish community. Its own self-perpetuation as an institution has been its all-important goal, to the detriment of the spiritual growth of Jewry as a whole. To overcome this evil has been the main function of the Jewish Education Committee, which has been functioning in New York for the last three years. It is, therefore, tragic folly for those, who want Judaism to live, to keep sniping at the Jewish Education Committee of New York and bureaus of Jewish education in other cities, because they happen to give aid also to organizations with a different program of Jewish education from their own.

We called attention once before to the danger of such destructive criticism, when we commented on attacks against the Jewish Education Committee of New York which had been made at the meeting of the Hebrew P.E.N. Club, We feel the need of repeating our admonition because the issue has again been raised, this time by an article by Ben Halpern, "Dissension in Jewish Education," which appears in the May number of *The Jewish Frontier.* To do that paper justice, it must be stated that Dr. Halpern's article was preceded in the same number by one on "Community in Jewish Education," written by Dr. Alexander M. Dushkin, the executive director of the Jewish Education Committee. Dr. Dushkin's article, however, is purely expository; Dr. Halpern's is polemical.

There is no room in this editorial to answer the unfair innuendoes by which Dr. Halpern tries to discredit the Committee. His main criticism is directed against the support given by the Committee to the "Commission on New Approaches" in publicizing its program of a minimal Jewish education. What must be clearly apprehended is that any committee or bureau which approaches the problem of Jewish education from the communal standpoint must inherently be vulnerable to the kind of criticism Dr. Halpern offers. And this, too, must be

(Continued on Page 24)

THE
Reconstructionist

is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues starting in Oct., by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 15 W. 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription: $1.00 per year; 10c. per copy; foreign, 25c. extra. Membership in Foundation, $5.00 per year, including subscription to The Reconstructionist. Entered as second class matter Jan. 9, 1935, at Post Office, New York, N. Y., under act of March 3, 1879.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman: Mordecai M. Kaplan.
Associate Chairman: Ira Eisenstein
Managing Editor: Eugene Kohn.
Associate Editors: Shlomo Bardin, Asher Block, Israel S. Chipkin, Samuel Dinin, Abraham G. Duker, Judith K. Eisenstein, Solomon Goldman, Bernard Heller, Philip Houtz, Samuel C. Kohs, Louis M. Levitsky, Theodore N. Lewis, Milton Steinberg.

Contributing Editors: Michael Alper, Nathan A. Barack, Morton M. Berman, Philip S. Bernstein, Samuel M. Blumenfield, Ben Zion Bokser, William I. Boxerman, Mortimer J. Cohen, Miriam R. Ephraim, Harry Essrig, Emanuel Gamoran, Judah I. Goldin, Jacob S. Golub, Robert Gordis, Emanuel Green, Max Kadushin, Joshua Loth Liebman, I. D. Minzberg, Edward T. Sandrow, Simon Shetzer, Joshua Trachtenberg, Jacob J. Weinstein.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE AGUDATH ISRAEL, THE non-Zionist branch of Jewish Orthodoxy, by whom even the Mizrachi is suspected of heresy, grows more and more obstreperous. Recently they cried havoc about the alleged attempt to convert to irreligion the children of Jewish refugees brought into Palestine by the Youth Aliyah. They even enlisted the aid of Chief Rabbi Herzog and of Rabbi Berlin of the Mizrachi who created a violent agitation in the Yiddish press in America. The facts about the situation as vouched for by the Jewish Agency in Palestine are these: of the 839 children involved 123 joined their parents in Palestine, 35 were taken by relatives, 16 have been hospitalized or are still to be placed, 40 were placed under the supervision of the Agudath Israel, 278 with the Mizrachi and 36 with the conservative Ahavah and Beth Jehoshuah groups, and 290 were placed in non-Orthodox institutions or settlements. All children over 14 years of age were given the right to choose where they wished to go, while others were placed according to the customary religious life of their parents or according to the parents' specific wishes, where such were known. Doubtful cases will be given religious training.

The Agudath Israel (which in America has, by the way, withdrawn from the American Jewish Conference) is making trouble in England. It has pronounced a public boycott on the British Keren Hayesod Campaign, although urged to desist by a conference of Palestine rabbis including Chief Rabbis Herzog and Uzziel.

Dr. Schechter, who was certainly sympathetic with the most extreme forms of genuine Jewish piety, had a name for the sort of Jews represented in the Agudath Israel. He called them *"tzaddikim le-hak'is,"* ("saints for spite").

▼

WHEN THE PRESIDENT FIRST appointed a federal committee on fair employment practice to abolish all forms of racial and religious discrimination in production plants operating on government contracts there was great rejoicing in Negro and in Jewish circles. Soon, however, complaints began to pour in. The Committee was under the control of the War Manpower Commission and was

hamstrung in its work. Various religious bodies demanded an investigation, and it appears that their efforts have not been in vain. A new Fair Employment Practices Committee has been appointed under the chairmanship of Monsignor Francis J. Haas, who promises to clear up "this filthy situation." Encouraging is the fact that the Committee has been removed from the control of the War Manpower Commission and set up as an independent agency within the Office for Emergency Management of the Executive Office of the President. The Committee will be appointed directly by the President and is sure to have his full backing.

▼

WELCOME TO *Liberal Judaism,* a new monthly published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations! It will "foster progressive Judaism —for the advancement of the spiritual and cultural ideals of Israel and mankind." The first issue is good to look at and interesting to read. In addition to the various departments, there is a special section entitled, "The Synagogue." This section, formerly a maagzine in its own right, should appeal particularly to those who are deeply concerned with improving the synagogue on the American scene. That *Liberal Judaism* promises not to be stodgy is apparent from the announcement that the second issue will carry a symposium on Zionism. Good luck!

▼

THE RECENT DISSOLUTION OF the Comintern has had some interesting effects. In Palestine, a Communist Party has been in existence for years. It has included Jews and Arabs. During the Comintern days, when the Soviet Union was still regarding Zionism as counter-revolutionary, the Communist Party fought Zionism in the name of a kind of denationalized proletariat. A message comes now from Tel Aviv to the effect that the Communist Party in Palestine has announced its dissolution. But behold: "Separate Jewish and Arab Communist groups will continue to exist, but with no connection between the two." Apparently, the move in Russia in the direction of nationalism has split the party in Palestine into two "separate"—very likely antagonistic—parties. Now the Jewish communists in Palestine will have to become Zionists.

▼

SINCE 1914, THE JEWISH STAtistical Bureau has attempted to do a useful and necessary job. But unfortunately, every few years, the auspices under which it worked was changed. Five times this has happened. Now a new group has been formed to sponsor this work, a National Council, consisting of representatives of the three major congregational bodies and the four major rabbinic associations. The most recent change should not have been necessary, for the Synagogue Council, consisting of these very organzations, has been trying for three years to raise the necessary funds, and the response has been meager. Will the various organizations in the form of the National Council succeeded better than they did in the form of the Synagogue Council? We hope so, and we urge the various groups to make a place in their budgets for the statistical work. This work, in America, must be done under the auspices of religious groups; but there is no reason why many non-religious organizations should not support it, too.

▼

AN ARTICLE BY HANS LAMM, which appeared in the April issue of *The Jewish Forum,* makes an interesting and valuable proposal. The article cautions

(Continued on Page 24)

A Pen Portrait of Peretz Smolenskin

By GRACE GOLDIN

Smolenskin's Resemblance To Stevenson

I THINK of Peretz Smolenskin as a sort of Ghetto Robert Louis Stevenson—in the portraits of both men we find the same high cheekbones and sallow, dark complexion; the same compelling eyes, aglitter with fever; the same long face and longer moustachios. These two writers lived almost at the same time, but half the globe separated them. They were centuries removed from each other in their diverse cultures, yet both were protestants in heart and pen; and though their lives were cut short by sickness and by death, each was known to be a man of charm and a gallant spirit.

The difficulties which beset Stevenson were not of quite the same origin as Smolenskin's. Both men eventually suffered the loss of their health, constantly struggling to produce despite their patchwork bodies; but whereas Stevenson had been ailing since childhood, Smolenskin's illness was the natural result of a Ghetto life: of privation during childhood and of wandering during adolescence and of overwork in manhood. Such, in two words, was the life of Smolenskin. When he was a child, his father was slanderously accused by a village priest of a crime he had never committed; the poor Jew was forced to leave home and lie low for years, leaving the support of his half-dozen children to their mother. She, worthy woman, frantically worked for them, with a dream of yet making them rabbis. Her problems were further complicated by a vagabond who brought her false news of her husband's death—the tramp wanted to marry her himself and let her support him too. And during the father's absence, his oldest son was seized by Russian authorities for military service; he was carried off and never heard from again. After this sampling of miseries the father was allowed to rejoin his family. There were a few comparatively comfortable years for them all till, when Peretz was ten, his father died.

Student Years

At the elderly age of eleven the boy was sent off to a *yeshivah* at Sklav, alone and on foot. He was the youngest pupil there. His open, charming, lively disposition made him a friend of all; he sometimes sat at the rabbi's table, and for the rest of his meals "ate days" around the town, now at the table of one pious burgher and now at another's. For a while things went well for him.

But the authorities discovered that Peretz was too friendly altogether—too lax and uncritical in his choice of friends. In an effort to learn Russian, he had made the acquaintance of a *maskil,* that is to say a real heretic, one who read sinful Gentile books and lent those books to Peretz; and Peretz read the books, alone by the light of one candle, in the woman's gallery. The ultra-orthodox, in holy horror, dealt with the fourteen-year-old as though he were a heretic himself: withdrew his daily meals, beat him, expelled him. The misery with which Smolenskin had been familiar during his father's absence once more engulfed him; more crushingly, now he was on his own. In rage and revolt against all orthodoxy, he betook himself to the hasidic camp to make trial of their kind of life. They too did not sort with his temperament. He found their mysticism too full of ignorance and awkward for his taste; it led even further away from the *haskalah* for which he had been prepared. "Enlightenment" was a heresy of which the simple, pious hasidim were entirely ignorant.

Seeking His Fortune

Smolenskin took to the road to seek his fortune. What did a young Ghetto intellectual do in those days? He taught Hebrew and Talmud, served as a cantor, got himself ordained as a ritual slaughterer. None of these businesses made him much of a fortune. From city to city he wandered, even as far as Odessa, the enlightened city, Paris of the Litvaks. Here European conditions prevailed for Jews—the Jews were just like Gentiles; they spoke the Russian tongue and received a Russian education. *Haskalah* had long been working toward just such equality; and the *maskil* Smolenskin entered the city eagerly, prepared to discover a renaissance of Judaism. But he found that enlightened Jews were the most ignorant, the most neglectful of their birthright. The spirit of Judaism had completely escaped them; though they dutifully held fast to forms, it was with a cold and careless heart. These thoroughly disenchanted Smolenskin. It seemed that no one had hit upon the right solution; he found himself, with the most sincerely Jewish heart imaginable, opposed to all established trends of Judaism. But perhaps Enlightenment failed only with the thoughtless, the ignorant, the *nouveau-riche*? Smolenskin still had hopes for *haskalah* in his own life; and he began to educate himself at long last in forbidden subjects: languages, natural history, philosophy.

Smolenskin As Hebrew Journalist

His bent now carried him into the field of journalism. At first, like any *maskil,* he turned out Hebrew adaptations and such translations as the editor of the journal *Hamelitz* required of him. But the work hampered him; he had more to say to the Jews than this. And since he knew of no Hebrew journal which would trust itself to print original work from a Hebrew writer, the penniless scribbler, *shohet, melammed* and *hazzan* decided to publish a magazine of his own. How he made ends meet in his new enterprise one cannot quite imagine. He tended and fostered the periodical, he wrote, "like a tender mother who does not shrink from any labor or hardship for the sake of her offspring. . . . I robbed myself of sleep, for years permitted myself no rest, only so that it might be kept up. I was author, proof-reader, and bookkeeper. I mailed out the issues on time, wrote letters, read letters, read articles. All these things were done by myself alone, not a soul was by to help me." This magazine he named *Ha-Shahar,* The Dawn, and the name was appropriate.

In the very first issue Smolenskin defined his policy. He was not conducting a magazine for the orthodox; he held no brief for paralytic ideals. Neither did he propose to defend the anti-orthodox: those light-headed, free-living Jews of the Western influence who, in throwing away the cask that contained their Judaism, had lost the wine as well. For whom, then, did he write?—For those who, like himself, loved Judaism, and wanted to restore its free development. The editor of *Ha-Shahar,* having given up religious observance himself, did not mean by "development" a return to religion. We are not merely a religion! he cried; we are a nation, and the tie binding us most closely together is the Hebrew language, which takes the place, for us exiles, of fatherland. This is the thing Western Jews seek to discard and to forget; yet if they succeed they will deal its deathstroke to Judaism. "We have neither monuments nor land, neither name nor memorials save the one relic that has remained to us from the ruin of our sanctuary, our Hebrew language; yet they regard it with shame and contempt. Those who despise the Hebrew language thereby reject our nation, and have neither name nor memo-

rial in the house of Israel; they are traitors to their people and their faith.

"They say to us, 'Let us be like all other nations! And I agree with all my heart: Let us indeed be like other nations in the pursuit of knowledge . . . in being loyal citizens of the lands of our dispersion; but let us also, like them, be unashamed of the rock whence we were hewn. Let us be like them in honoring our own language, our own nationhood!"

Young Jews who had felt the very inadequacies which distressed Smolenskin rallied round this cry. When Smolenskin discredited the emancipation that led to Reform, young and half-emancipated Jewish writers took heart, and lent their talents also to *Ha-Shahar*. Contributions poured in upon the new periodical; it soon became the leading Jewish paper of its time. A born editor, Smolenskin played author against author, drawing forth the finest efforts of the most brilliant Hebrew pens. He would accept no translations, only original work. And from ten till one and sometimes two o'clock in the morning, when the press of editing a paper single-handed had been concluded for the day, he did his own writing for *Ha-Shahar*.

Smolenskin As Novelist

He wrote a series of semi-autobiographical novels, based on all he had seen of Jewry; and he called the first one, "A Wanderer on the Paths of Life." Save for highly romantic novels, this was the first piece of fiction offered the Hebrew reading public. They loved it, precisely because it did not deal with far-off things. Smolenskin had a gift for colored and humorous detail; he had traveled, in his time, from one end to another of the Jewish world, and all that he had seen he put down in detail. His novel established a reading public for the magazine, whose readers discovered that Smolenskin had other things to impart to them beside realism, pathos and humor. He had an idea, which he worked out piece by piece and page by page. It was not published in its entirety till 1872, in a book called *Am Olam* (Eternal People). That book became the credo for the new nationalist movement.

Smolenskin's Jewish Nationalism

Why, in an age when universal brotherhood is dreamed of even in Russia, need we return to Nationalism? asks Smolenskin. But, he countered: What *is* national devotion? Is it not merely the devotion to family, raised to a higher power and made more inclusive? The universal love of man is not discredited by the love one bears one's family. Why then should the love of one's own nation prejudice advancement of mankind as a whole? So he justified his cause to Jewish universalists. Then he went to work at the opposite end, from the point of view of the orthodox millions. For them, he brilliantly identified national awakening with the old Messianic ideal. Throughout the centuries, Smolenskin explained, the hope of Messiah's coming has been overlaid and encrusted with mystical, religious, obscure arabesques till now it seems to be compounded in very essence of the otherworldly and divine. But in reality the messianic hope is secular and political; it is just the hope of the Jews for a better national future. We *are* a nation, sharing certain national aspirations, no matter what country we live in. Hebrew is our common language, national restoration our common destiny. Smolenskin was the first Jewish writer almost since the time of the prophets to speak of national rebirth in such down-to-earth terms. With one stroke he cut through centuries of religious tradition; yet he made one feel that the old traditions were but the oriental trappings of Judaism, that its heart was safe. The heart of Judaism is more than the Jewish religion, Smolenskin preached; it is a matter of intense national feeling which even in the absence of religion

might sustain Israel. Many who listened to these assertions were smitten, as Smolenskin had been, with love for their own nation; they also resolved to devote their lives to a restoration.

The time would come when what they felt could be put into practice. The heyday of Russian liberalism was soon to be cut short; then those who had not been persuaded to act for the love of Zion would be compelled to act in despite of Russia. Twelve years before the event, Smolenskin foresaw the breakdown of liberalism. He hailed it; he was grimly pleased to think of it as a reminder to Jews of their nationhood, recalling them from the nations of the world. Living in countries not their own, Jews would never be fully tolerated nor liked, so long as they were a weak and defenseless minority. Let them build up a healthy state somewhere in the world, whose prestige will improve the Jewish status everywhere. In the beginning he did not feel that Palestine was necessarily the one land for Jews. He feared that this country, however dear to Jewish hearts, was entirely inaccessible, at least for the present, and beyond reclaim; and he was wary of an overhasty attempt to repossess it that might end in failure. But here his instinct and his passion outran reason; and though his mind could never trust in a restoration, his heart was its advocate when there seemed least hope. When the first colonization societies were formed, his feelings mastered him; and for a few glad years he became their spiritual sponsor.

But the privation, the overwork, the inhuman strain of single-handedly sustaining the Dawn, had told on him. He died at forty-three. The people, to whose Judaism he gave his life, greatly honored him. Four years before his death, in 1880, an edition of his collected works was published and widely acclaimed; and when Smolenskin toured Russia at that time to meet the new generation of Jews whom he himself had trained, through *Ha-Shahar,* in the love of the Hebrew tongue, he was everywhere greeted as a prince.

Peretz Smolenskin's Contribution to Jewish Thought

By DAVID POLISH*

SMOLENSKIN'S spiritual growth may be divided into two phases. The first was the pre-Zionist phase, which was distinguished by strong negations. The second was the Zionist phase.

Smolenskin's Negations

The process of negation involved casting off the basic premises of Jewish life in Europe. He was the first Hebrew writer to renounce the most basic premise of all—that Jewish life in the Diaspora is a possibility. He dismissed hope of any future for Diaspora Judaism. His second negation was the dismissal of all contemporary approaches to the Jewish question—Jewish scholarship, *Hasidism, Haskalah.* Finally, Smolenskin rejected the place of European culture in the development of Jewish spiritual and national values.

Smolenskin's despair of the Diaspora is represented in *Hagemul* (1867) and *Nekam Berit* (1884). The former is an adaptation of a German work. It tells of a Jewish youth who affirms that there is

*Rabbi, Temple Israel, Waterbury, Conn.

no room for Judaism in a Poland struggling for her independence, and that with Polish freedom the lot of the Jew will also improve. He devotes himself to the cause of Polish independence, but his Christian associates resent the presence of a Jew in their midst, and betray him to the Russian authorities. In his disillusionment, he sees no hope for Jewry in Poland. He lives to see the attacks on loyal Polish Jews by the erstwhile revolutionists, and he recalls his father's admonition to flee the land. The disillusionment is complete. There is but one escape for Smolenskin—away from Poland. But he does not yet have a destination. (*Nekam Berit,* written after the events of 1881, reiterates with heightened bitterness the futility of the *galut,* but now the author has found his objective—Palestine.)

Smolenskin repudiated not only the external but the internal forces in Jewish life. This wholesale negation is delineated in *Hatoeh.* This is the record of a lost Jewish soul. The leading character personifies the Jew who cannot find a desirable way of life. His personal contacts with many Jews are unpleasant. He constantly encounters corruption and evil in the Jewish communities which he visits. Desperately seeking a happy adjustment, he tries out all sorts of Jewish groups. He finds in the *yeshivot* an excessive devotion to learning which excludes all worldly ambitions. This is repugnant to him. "The love of Torah and the contempt for labor . . . have struck their roots deep." (Book II, p. 23). He turns from the nationalism of the *yeshivah* to the mysticism of the Hasidim and recoils again. Nor do the Mitnaggedim (opponents of Hasidism) offer greater promise. There follows a brief junket with Haskalah (the "Enlightenment") but the disappointment is inevitable. Haskalah cannot inspire confidence because it stems from enlightenment which the author regards as suspect. France, shrine of liberty and enlightenment, is not free of anti-Semitism. (Book IV, p. 21). Not only is Haskalah disqualified because of this relationship, but its teachings are also untenable. Its "back-to-physical-labor movement" is ridiculed because it emanates from German Jewish merchants and traders, and because Russian Jews, who indulge in hard labor, are no better off than the bourgeoisie. (Book IV, 70). The author had hoped that Haskalah would bring happiness and wisdom to his people, but, instead, "I beheld the victims of Haskalah . . . and I cried out, for I have seen evil and trouble. . . ." (Book IV, 107).

After each tragic episode which befalls the *"Toeh,"* Smolenskin recalls the utter chaos of Jewish life and the abysmal confusion with which it engulfs him. "I walked among wanderers; wanderers guided me; wanderers persecuted me, aided me, counselled me; and, I like them, was a wanderer in the pathways of life." (Book II, p. 300). As in *Hagemul,* Smolenskin exposes the emptiness of the ideals in which Jews had put their trust, but he offers no way out, except a warning to others not to err as he did. The story ends with the death of the central figure. He has thus come to the end of a futile Jewish life, but even on the threshold of death he remains bewildered. He is truly the marginal man—divorced from his old way of life, vainly searching for a new.

Kevurat Hamor (1874) strikes the same mood, but in this story can be felt the first stirrings of escape from the spiritual trap. In this tale, Smolenskin pits Haskalah against Jewish obscurantism. Like J. L. Gordon, he exposes the bigotry and venality of the communal leaders, their superstition and their relentless hounding of the weak. Because of their authority, they are in a position to dominate the individual and suppress his personal liberty. Smolenskin presents the lone figure of a young *maskil,* a quixotic

character, who dares to attempt to overcome his people's debased leadership by laying bare its ignorance and improbity. He cherishes the faith that an objective test of enlightenment versus bigotry will win the day for him. But he is to learn that the people will not follow merely if shown the light. He is to learn that victory is in the hands of those who wield power and authority, those who are organized to impose their collective will. The assassination of the young idealist is a crushing commentary on the futility of his struggle. There is in the story, however, a suggestion of a new approach. It lies in group action. In one scene, the victims of the community's masters meet to plan group resistance against their oppression. This is the first hint that the united efforts of the Jewish people might be an effective check to Jewish dictatorship. This concept is to be developed by Smolenskin in his essays. Its logical result is Zionism.

Smolenskin's third negation involves European culture. This is discussed in *Simhat Hanef* (1872). European letters exerted an influence upon Hebrew poetry and prose. Thus European concepts of nationality found access to Hebrew works. Smolenskin was the first Hebrew writer to repudiate this influence. He contended that Jewish nationalism differed from European nationalism, and that to lean upon European standards was to adulterate the Hebraic national expression. He pitted Hebraic against European literary and spiritual values, and sought to prove that the former made for a higher and different kind of nationalism. Much of *Simhat Hanef* is a dissertation on this problem. Superficially it is an evaluation of the comparative merits of different literatures. Fundamentally, however, it is an examination of antithetical national values. Smolenskin assigns the defense of European letters to a *maskil* who is also the story's chief scoundrel. The protaganist of Hebrew culture is an opponent of Haskalah and a man of integrity.

Smolenskin attempts to prove that the prototypes of Haskalah literature, among them Goethe and Voltaire, represented everything repugnant to the Jewish national spirit. They are responsible for the resurgence of idolatry in Europe. (*Simhat Hanef,* pp. 148-150).

Thus, Smolenskin argues, the paganism of Europe's literary giants is incompatible with Jewish values. From this point, he proceeds to indicate that whatever is worthwhile in the works of men like Goethe and Shakespeare is a result of the influence of Hebraic values. Why should modern Hebrew authors follow European currents when their most meritorious elements are Hebraic? Shakespeare's Hamlet and Goethe's Faust are both spiritual heirs of Kohelet and Job. But while Shakespeare and Goethe were of two different nationalities, the authors of both Biblical works were Jewish (*Simhat Hanef,* pp. 185-201). Hebrew culture is thus superior on two counts—it is antipagan, and it lies at the foundation of what is truly great in European letters. Having established the superiority of Jewish culture, Smolenskin is loathe to equate it with any other. He takes Lessing to task for his parable of the rings. "Had the judges looked carefully they would have seen that the rings were not identical. . . . Come what may, we certainly know which is the original ring. . . ." (Ibid. 192-193).

Thus was sounded the first note of independence in Hebrew literature. Its only equivalent is to be found in Samuel David Luzzatto's critique of Michal's poetry.

Smolenskin's Approach to Jewish Nationalism

By laying the foundation for Judaism's moral outlook upon authentic Jewish sources, Smolenskin sought to prepare the way for Jewish nationalism. This expo-

sition is a clue to Smolenskin's theory of Jewish nationalism. As developed in his essays, it means basically the fullest modern development by the Jewish people of their spiritual and cultural way of life. It should be noted, however, that even Smolenskin could not effect a tour de force of cultural isolationism. It needs only to be pointed out that *Simhat Hanef* shares much in common with Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften.* Moreover, his essays abound in allusions to European nationalism on which he draws for support and justification of Jewish nationalism.

In his second period, that of political Zionism, Smolenskin arrives at the nationalist solution of the Jewish question through an analysis of two problems. One is the nature and function of reformation in Judaism; the other is the national character of Jewish religion. Both, in effect, are concerned with an analysis of the Jewish spirit. His preoccupation with the former problem is prompted by the need of a rationale for his severely critical attitude toward German Reform and the teachings of Mendelssohn. After assailing them, he establishes his own criteria for reformation in Jewish life. His reasoning, stripped of its ponderous circumlocutions, pursues the following course.

His Critique of Reform

There are two fundamental objections to Reform. One is that it does not have the sanction of the Jewish masses. Secondly, it has failed to unite Israel. Smolenskin's chief argument is that the function of reformation must be to strengthen our national character, but that German Reform has dessicated it. If there are to be any reforms, they must enjoy popular endorsement which would give them authority. The people have the right to repudiate innovators who are in the minority. (Essays, Vol. I, 1-33). The reason for thus protecting our religious laws is that our religion is the one uniting factor for all Israel. It should be noted that, to Smolenskin, Jewish religion meant the entirety of Israel's spiritual heritage, not what it meant to his Reform opponents, an arbitrarily defined segment of it. It included the inextricably related ideals of God, Israel, Torah, land, and language. In this particular context, Smolenskin uses the terms religion and nationalism interchangeably. We must, therefore, regard religion not only as a faith, but as a surrogate for a homeland, language and all other factors which unite other peoples. Just as among free nations, basic changes cannot be made without the consent of the governed, so must our religious heritage be guarded.

It is true that, in the course of our history, we have accumulated a preponderance of laws pertaining to communal life, worship, etc. Many of them are outworn and ineffective and require change. Before we can reform them, however, we must answer these questions:

1. Why are our times different from former eras when Jews, who then also endured a plethora of laws, did not complain?

2. Why has the urge for innovations arisen in Germany and nowhere else? If we say that this is due to political emancipation, the statement is refuted by the fact that emancipation took hold earlier in France and England. If we attribute it to the superiority of German-Jewish scholarship, this is disproved by the dominance of Jewish scholarship in Russia and Poland. In fact, Mendelssohn's chief disciples came from Eastern Europe.

3. Why do the reformers seek to reform the Jewish religion when there are more burdensome requirements in other phases of Jewish life?

4. Why do they try to uproot "the hope of redemption and all remembrance of Zion from the hearts of their brothers?" Do they expect thereby to make the Jews more loyal citizens? Through-

out our history we have constantly been loyal citizens, without surrendering our hope for redemption.

The answer to the first question lies in the historical fact that Jewish laws were multiplied in times of trouble in order to be both a protecting hedge for the people and to withdraw them from an oppressive world. Anti-Jewish hatred converted us from universalists, seeking to bring the message of world redemption to all mankind, into spiritual isolationists, buttressed behind our laws. Understanding the function of the law, the Jew considered reforms superfluous because, in time of liberty and freedom, the people of their own accord disregarded the restrictions of the Law. It was therefore unthinkable that individuals should take it upon themselves to alter it. (Ibid. 58-127).

The answer to the second question is that Jewish reformers in Germany were driven to innovations out of a desire to mimic the Christian Reformation, which originated in Germany.

The reason for the reformers' concern with religious change only is that they hoped to eradicate the external differences between Judaism and Christianity, and thereby earn a claim to equality.

The reason for the eradication of the hope for redemption was fear of the dual allegiance charge. (Ibid. 128-135).

This type of reformation ultimately led to apostasy, and Mendelssohn is largely to blame, because his teachings of a universal religion led his adherents to the fonts of the dominant religion.

The greatest offense of Reform has been its repudiation of the hope for redemption. This is all that remains to unite Israel, for our religious bonds, practices and laws have been broken. No liberal person will blame us for clinging to this hope. "Had anyone predicted a hundred years ago . . . that the Serbian people . . . would establish a kingdom . . . he would have been ridiculed. Nevertheless this came to pass, because the people so willed it. Had Israel truly wanted to rediscover his land, he could have done so. . . . Even the governments which oppress him . . . would desist if they realized that he possessed a land . . . for it is the nature of man to respect him who has a territory. . . . Even if we say that it is not likely that we can establish a goverment, it is nevertheless our duty to cling to this hope, because it is a unifying force." (Ibid. 141-145).

It has been demonstrated that Reform has been untrue to Jewish tradition. That does not alter the fact that Jewish life is in need of vital change. How can this be achieved without committing the errors of Reform, namely, its failure to represent the people and to unify them? The essence of the program must be to find a method of uniting the Jewish people.

First of all, there should be national assemblies for the purpose of studying the laws and lightening their burden. Thus new religious practices will be based upon the will of the people and upon the Torah as well. In this way, the whole people will be instructed, and will not have decisions imposed from above. (Ibid. 158-161).

Second, the unifying process must involve renewing the Jewish hope for redemption. This hope is utterly dependent upon the fostering of the Hebrew language. The enemies of Jewish national hopes try to destroy our language, for without it there is no Torah, and without Torah there is no Jewish people. If we conscientiously desire to make reforms for the purpose of aiding and uniting Israel, we have no other choice but to teach Hebrew to the people. (Ibid. 171-175).

The third requirement for the unification of Israel is an agency which will undertake this task. Such an agency is the Alliance Israelite Universelle. (Ibid. 34-42) Without the unifying strength of this group, we are in danger of disinte-

gration as a result of the weakening of our religious observance and of our belief in future redemption.

Thus, religious change by popular approval and in the spirit of Torah; the redemptive urge; the Hebrew language; and the Alliance are the true reforms which must be achieved in Jewish life.

His Analysis of the Nature of Judaism

After having established the principle that true reformation must mean the cultivation of nationhood, Smolenskin develops his second thesis. This revolves around the distinctive character of Judaism which embodies religious and national traits in an indivisible entity. His quarrel is with Reform and Haskalah for attempting to split this unity.

Smolenskin begins by attacking the position of Mendelssohn's followers who insisted that we are a religious group only. While Mendelssohn was himself not to blame, his inadequate leadership permitted his followers to corrupt his teachings. Thus, while there can be no objection to necessary reforms, the hypothesis that we have ceased to be a nation is a most dangerous innovation. To Smolenskin, Jewish nationalism and Jewish religion are, in their all-encompassing comprehensiveness, interchangeable.

By creating a dichotomy between the terms, the German Haskalah has furnished anti-Semitism with dangerous weapons and has also weakened our own position. The translation of the Pentateuch alienated an entire generation from the Hebrew language and from Judaism, resulting eventually in wholesale apostasy. (Ibid. 73). Mendelssohn's aping of Germanism not only obstructed the growth of Jewish nationalism but also encouraged the alienation from Hebraic values. (Ibid. 89-93).

Historically, however, national, and not religious (in the Reform sense), bonds sustained us. This is because our national development has been different from that of other peoples. Our national life has not been dependent upon government, land, or language. What, then, has been the source of our national existence? It has been "the unique spirit of Israel" and our early training. All other nations were born in their own lands. They passed under all sorts of government, but they were conditioned to regard themselves as nations only so long as they occupied their own soil. But Israel, though born in a strange country, nevertheless regarded itself as a nation. For this reason it never developed the notion that, should it be exiled, it would cease to be a national group. In all of our prayers we refer to *Am Yisrael,* not *Dat Yisrael.* Just as our nationhood developed without land, so did our government and laws. Among other nations, these factors are relevant only when rooted in a given territory. But Israel had government and laws before it had a land. They were spiritual and hence they could be observed in any place. Israel selected not a temporal but a Divine King. How could such a nation be overthrown?

Thus, with subsequent loss of their state, the Jews did not become an exclusively religious group, for they did not build their unity upon religious foundations. To understand this concept, we must appreciate the distinction between the Jewish and other religions. Among other peoples, religion and nation are separate elements. But in Israel, religion was accepted simultaneously with our national status, (Vol. IV, 160-164).

Our laws are likewise not religious in the accepted sense. They are signs of national unity. They deal with national conduct. This is symbolized by the fact that instead of a specific term for religion, Israel used such terms as *Torah* and *Berit.* The latter signifies an open and contractual acceptance of our religion, not a superimposed cult. (Vol. IV, 165-166).

With the exception of Judaism, a religious group is one which differs from others in matters of faith; one whose faith is based upon reward and punishment, and also upon personal salvation. Israel, however, based its faith upon the concept of divine government and not upon a theory of future life. It dealt with the promise of God to take Israel as a people, to redeem them from slavery, and to settle them in their own land. According to this conception, the nations cannot be united until they believe in the One God, until God is enthroned, and until all governments and rulers are removed. (Ibid. 17-23).

Because our laws and government are spiritual, they must be studied continually. Other peoples must merely *obey* their temporal laws, but we must *study* ours. Study alone reminds us of our unity. We have been made different from all other nations by the Torah, our spiritual way of life, our national abode. Whenever our political fortunes declined, our adherence to Torah intensified. This was due not to the Torah's religious influence, in the sectarian sense, but rather to its capacity for arousing confidence in our ultimate redemption. It was basically a repository of our national consciousness. (Ibid. 167-177, 284).

In the light of this spiritual definition of Jewish nationalism, our first task must be to renounce the concept that we are a religion and not a nation. "Indeed, we once had a land, but that was not the bond which united us. The land which makes us one is our Torah. . . ." (Ibid. 146).

Refusal to accept the principle of nationhood makes our position in the Diaspora less tenable. Those who attempt to placate our enemies by disclaiming our nationhood imply that those who avow it are disloyal citizens. This plays into the hands of the anti-Semites. (Ibid. 107-122). The effort to strip ourselves of all national characteristics, including the Hebrew language and the hope for redemption, has earned for us not the approval of the Christian world, but its contempt. (Ibid. 66.) Anti-Semitism is not predicated upon Jewish conduct. It will burst forth upon the most "conforming" and the most "emancipated" of Jews. With terrifying accuracy, Smolenskin predicts:

"It is true that for the time being the Jews enjoy security in Germany. They still find shelter in the laws (of the land). Bismark who has been their protector will not suddenly become their enemy. But who knows what another day will bring? Hatred will increase. It will secretly send its shoots and pass from land to land. Who knows what form its fruit will take? Our short-sighted brethren neither see nor believe. . . . They believe that all is well with them, that trouble cannot arise in the nineteenth century. . . . But it is a vain dream. . . . While formerly their enemies were confined to haters of the Jewish religion . . . today they have multiplied until they include . . . (all disgruntled elements). Little by little they will gather around our enemies and at the opportune time, when the government will find need for them, it will abet them in carrying out their designs. Then it will be a time of trouble for Jacob." (Vol. III, 18-19.)

Not only must we regard ourselves as a nation, but the outer world also regards us thus. Even if we should secure full equality in the Diaspora, even if religious differences would be eradicated, jealousy of us would still prevail, and we should still be considered a nation. (Vol. I, 145-147.)

Recapitulating his concept of Jewish nationalism, Smolenskin writes: ". . . We are one people and the rules of faith alone are the cornerstone . . . of our national unity. These rules of faith are the belief in One God; the study of Torah in the original—for it is now for us both a land

and a language—the hope for a future redemption, which is for us a government. If one adheres to these three principles, then he is for Israel . . ." (Vol. I, 192-193.)

His Program of Action

Since the repudiation of our nationalism leads to spiritual and political bankruptcy, what are we to do? This question motivates Smolenskin's third proposition, in which he outlines a program of action.

To begin with, he contends that the "Jewish Question" cannot be solved by such efforts as back-to-the-farm movements. We must develop a way of life commensurate with our existing abilities and not with our ancient capacities.

If the nations do not permit us to do this, it is folly to even consider the problem. "Our destinies are not in our own hands but in the hands of others. As long as this condition prevails, there is no hope of saving us in a national way." "We can rescue individuals, but not the group." (Vol. II, 283; Vol. III, 6, 7, 33, 60). The only problem which we can solve is the moral problem, namely "How can we renew our covenant as of old, how can we breathe new life into the dry bones?" (Vol. II, 284; Vol. III, 7.)

Equally ineffective are the efforts of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. Its attempt to help the Jews of Rumania was fruitless. This is due to the lack of universal Jewish acceptance of the proposition that we are a nation. (Vol. III, 21.) (This statement was written seven years after Smolenskin's earlier endorsement of the Alliance in 1872.) The chief emphasis of the Alliance was upon financial relief. But what Rumanian Jewry wanted was political intervention and spiritual mooring. The Alliance paid lip service to the first and was indifferent to the second. Smolenskin, after visiting Rumania, recognized the need for training Jewish leaders who could guide Rumanian Jewry. The people were enthusiastic, but the Alliance was aloof. (Vol. III, 72-78.)

National unity cannot be achieved without first defeating the Berlin Haskalah. This can be done through an increased use of the Hebrew language. By means of a common tongue we can achieve common action. Hebrew alone will not solve our problems but without it the national spirit cannot be revived. Palestine is indispensable for the Jew, but its cause cannot be promulgated except through Hebrew. (Ibid. 90.)

From this point on, Smolenskin expatiates on the need for Jewish settlement in Palestine. He advances the theory that Jewish emigration from Europe will lessen anti-Semitism. (Ibid. 109-110.) Further, economic readjustment is possible only in our own homeland. (Ibid. 111-114.) This homeland is Palestine. It is preferable to other territories because it appeals to our national memories, it is capable of cultivation, it is not too distant geographically; Jews settling there will be able to live their own lives; the "Halukkah" Jews of Palestine will be regenerated. (Ibid. 119-120) The superiority of Palestine over America for settlement purposes is outlined as follows: (a) The migration to America will result in the scattering of the Jewish population. In America a few will prosper while the rest will suffer want and will be without aid. However, in Palestine the needy will be able to turn to the more prosperous settlers who preceded them, for help. (b) We have no guarantee that America's liberal laws will some day not be replaced by restrictive measures. (c) We are in a position to buy land in Palestine from Turkey. (d) We can eventually become a majority and exercise political control within the country. (e) "Upon the idea of Palestine depends the idea of our unity and existence. If (Jewish) groups gather in one place, it will become a center for the

learning and regulations of the people, and from there will emanate learning for all the nations." (Ibid. 188-190.) Smolenskin then appeals for a Congress of European Jews to discuss the settlement of Palestine. (Ibid. 226.) He presses the urgency of this proposal because "before long persecution will renew its strength . . . and there is no other place where we can hope for sanctuary . . . except Palestine. Oppression has lifted its head . . . because our enemies regret" the equality which they conferred upon us. (Vol. IV, 38.) Our position in the Middle Ages was better than it is now. Then we were protected by kings and noblemen who enjoyed economic advantage in our well-being. Today, however, our only foothold is business, and it is being torn from under us. If we should lose that, we are doomed in the Diaspora. (Ibid. 39.)

Heroic Religion

By EDWARD T. SANDROW*

RELIGION, and particularly the religious leader, have been objects of criticism—not always too generous—on the part of many sections of the laity. Writers have been wont to refer to the "soft security" of the clergy. The enemies of all forms of religious expression have run the gamut of satire in attacking the minister or priest or rabbi in terms not always complimentary or even in good taste: "parasites," "Elmer Gantrys," "sky-pilots," "drum-beaters," "diabolitical schemers to lull the masses into a sort of social somnambulism," "uncreative and unproductive elements in the body politic," and so on. While there have been clergymen who have not distinguished themselves either for intellectual or spiritual accomplishment, this has not been a reflection on religion as such or the message it has to bring. It has been due to the lack of moral fibre of the men themselves, to their inborn traits, to environmental conditions and to the social tools they have used. Although some "gentlemen of the gospel" have been misfits, indolent and insincere, have taken their jobs too lightly, the majority have labored selflessly and under difficulties which would have broken the ordinary professional or business man. Very few preachers have distinguished themselves in the press for their property or affluence. In fact the expression "poor as a church mouse" was probably first used in referring to clergymen and their social status. Yet, the trials of the civilian ministry seem light and insignificant in comparison to the task now undertaken by a corps of Chaplains in the army.

In speaking of the Chaplain, reference is made specifically to those men who have already left the shores of Continental United States and gone to overseas zones like Alaska and have consecrated themselves to a ministry fraught with danger, taking every ounce of strength and courage a normal human being can muster up. The complete story of such heroism will no doubt be penned after this war has come to an end. Suffice it to say, clergymen in the army have given up careers to minister to soldiers who are far from home, who need an anchor, who seek psychological adjustment, who yearn for religious expression—to whom the Chaplain is symbolic of future, of hope,

*Chaplain, Alaska Defense Command, United States Army.

of job, of family. Chaplains have already given their lives to be near those men needing medical care, who seek a word, a smile while facing the fire of the enemy. The experiences of some Chaplains today are thrilling addenda to the chapters of heroism and selflessness which have emblazoned the history of religion and society. Here is a series of chronicles in an unforgettable saga of service. These are taken from actual reports.

Writes one Chaplain: "One evening I returned to my quarters for the purpose of retiring for the night, and found the quarters, including the desk and bed, spattered with the blood of my own dead assistant. So I went to bed, but hardly to sleep."

Then again, "I have said Mass on packing cases, while standing ankle deep in muck. I have said Mass and held services where the wind slapped the shelter with wild reports that could have drowned out cannon booms. In general I have been confronted on numerous occasions when only the grace of God prevented death or serious injury to my person. Living and working in a country like this is a far cry from working and living under any circumstances in the States. Man's ability to fight for survival here is tested hourly."

Is this "parasitism" or "drum-beating"?

A Chaplain tells us—"I went to conduct services and hold conferences with men. Wading through creeks, winding through ravines we finally reached our destination. I found an empty ammunition box for a bench. There were seventeen men at this outpost. Fourteen came to the services, the other three acted as sentinels."

Sheer grit and physical ruggedness!

Says a Chaplain, "Even the bitter cold of Minnesota, the caprice of Kansas' constant winds, and the foul weather of coastal Washington cannot prepare a man for the almost unbelievable climatic surprizes at ..... We have held services in the open in a heavy blizzard. We have spent hours driving through cement-like mud. . . . Once a trip of 14 miles on a small power barge was involved—through the roughest waters in this area. That night no barge should have attempted the trip. The barge was grounded about 35 feet from shore. The only way to get on shore was by locking my arms over an iron hook and being swung out over the deck by a derrick and dropping down five or six feet into some mail sacks lying there. . . . For four hours the barge was tossed in a blizzard. When the waves weren't completely covering us, we were plastered with wet snow and rain. Visibility was nil. There were some soldiers on board who became wretchedly sick. They all lay on the small upper deck, too ill to care whether they rolled off or not. A sailor and I stood by the rail stopping them from going overboard by blocking them with our legs . . ." and so on.

Or, "In our squadron we have officers and men from every State in the Union. You can readily realize what a problem morale would be with men who have left the comforts of home and civilization to come to a primitive outpost more than 1,000 miles away from the nearest city. . . . One hears a great deal about civilian restrictions, but they are nothing to what the soldier overseas has to endure. . . ."

Or, "Many miles have been traveled to reach scattered appointments and over roads that were almost impassable. Many times I have been told, when arranging for transportation, that it would be hardly possible to reach the group. My reply to this has always been 'The Chaplain Must Go Through.' "

And lastly, "Today we went to one of the outposts. Stormy weather as usual. It was a long squat navy boat used for landing troops. Eight miles out in the bay to our destination. Spray drove over

the prow of the boat until everyone abroad was soaked. It bucked and rocked. . . . It was a new experience and one that I will never forget. Yet the men on the outpost knew that they have a Chaplain. . . . When men cannot come to the church (or synagogue) the church (or synagogue) goes to the men."

Such experiences are but a minute indication of the Army Chaplain's contribution to the war effort. The preachments of true religion become powerful realities in the deeds of valor performed by the Chaplain. He is friend, confidant, teacher, parent, all rolled into one. He serves in silence without the fanfare of publicity or the adulation of a membership. In storm and stress, through fire and thirst—he is a pioneer of the spirit, a willing servant of the Lord. These men compel faith—they generate courage. Let then the scoffers and cynics see and learn what positive religion in action means by studying the daily exploits of scores of Chaplains of all denominations who today serve in our great citizen army.

Book Notes

All in the Name of Patriotism

MODERN JAPAN AND SHINTO NATIONALISM, by D. C. Holton. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., 1943.

AS Americans and as Jews we ought not only read this book but study and ponder every sentence of it, so revealing is its account of the part played by religion in rendering the present world-confusion even more confounded. We cannot come to terms with the Sphinx-like riddle of contemporary life by ignoring the problem of religion. It is just as important to reckon with the problem of religion in the post-war world as with the problem of international trade, currency and food supply. In certain quarters the suggestion of reeducating or reconditioning the German mind is being seriously discussed. What of the Japanese mind? The "New Order" in Asia is not a billboard slogan of a Japanese Office of War Information. It is a highly emotionalized goal of a mighty nation engaged in a Holy War. To meet the menace to Democracy and world peace that is Japan, we must understand her and the demonic forces she has conjured up. For such understanding, "Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism" is an indispensable text. The author, D. C. Holton, a Christian, representative of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, who lived and taught in Japan for thirty years, is a recognized authority on Shinto religion.

Most people are somewhat familiar with what has happened to religion in Germany, though they seldom take the trouble to think through what is implied in those happenings. In order to intensify her national spirit, Germany has sought to resurrect her native religion, which had been virtually extinct, and to suppress Christianity which is her adopted religion. By substituting the religion of blood and soil for the religion of the spirit, she hopes to instil into her people a common will and a common purpose. She proclaims that she has at last found her true soul in returning to the gods of

her ancestors, to Thor, Woden and Freya and to the mythical lore of the Niebelungen. She has gradually but systematically been rendering Christianity impotent by compelling it to refrain from all social and political activities and to confine itself to the interests of the hereafter. This religious revolution is a concomitant of her determination to confer blessing upon the world by ruling it politically and culturally.

Nevertheless, as compared with the experience and efficiency of Japan, in effecting a religious revolution as part of a program of world domination, Germany is a mere raw and awkward novice. "There is probably no nation on earth today," says our author, "more conscience of itself, its psychological and institutional characteristics, its problems and tensions than is the Japanese." This intense self-awareness Japan owes to the extraordinary ability, cleverness and concentrated devotion to the purpose of military conquest which characterize her ruling class. Since 1868, when the feudalism that had kept Japan divided was suppressed and the present dynasty came into power, the policy of her ruling class has been to establish the ancient worship of the sun-goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, and of the Emperor, who is assumed to be her descendant and living incarnation, as an obligatory expression of loyalty to the state. That ancient worship is known as Shinto, a name given to it in the sixth century by the Chinese. Shinto denotes "the way of the gods," in contrast with the religion of Buddha which the Chinese brought with them. In the course of the centuries Buddhism, in combination with some survivals of Shintoism, became the main religion of the Japanese. It is still their main religion, almost in the same sense as Christianity is still the main religion of the Germans. It numbers forty million adherents and has 110,000 temples and places of propaganda throughout the land. It has been the main civilizing influence in Japan for the last fourteen centuries, to a far greater degree than Christianity has been in Germany. Despite all that, Buddhism is today on the defensive. It is fighting for its existence against the Shintoism which it helped to raise from a primitive tribal paganism into a respectable cult.

The outlook of Christianity in Japan is no brighter. The Christian churches number only about 240,000 members in a total of seventy million souls. It is very definitely a minority religion. In former years when the Japanese government sought to win the goodwill of the Christian nations, it permited Christianity to gain a foothold in Japan. In recent years, however, since Japan began to pursue a more openly aggressive policy and to clash with the Western powers, especially Great Britain and America, the Christian churches have been marked out for attack by the leaders of the government. The main charges against them are that, in promulgating a doctrine which makes for individualism, they undermine the unity of the nation and, in teaching monotheism, they nullify the worship of the Emperor as the highest divinity.

That, in the name of patriotism, the Japanese government is able to suppress religions which claim to be universal or cosmopolitan may not be surprising. But what is amazing is that, in the name of that same patriotism, it succeeds not only in suppressing all freedom of thought and intellectual inquiry but also in indoctrinating its people with the most absurd superstitions, to say nothing of the most extravagant and megalomaniac notions about Japan's place in the world. Even to doubt the literalness of the orthodox doctrine that the sun-goddess is the genuine flesh-and-blood ancestress of the reigning emperor is "to invite arrest by the police and legal prosecution in the courts." The consequent distortion of the

Japanese mind precludes all intellectual and moral integrity and makes of hypocracy a national trait.

More disturbing and frightening, however, even than the policies of Japan's ruling class in forcing state Shintoism upon all the peoples within the empire are the pathetic submission and accommodation of Buddhism and Christianity. The author, himself a Christian missionary, unfolds a tale of degrading expediency on the part of the Church that must shock anyone who has a concern for the good name of religion. The Church, the most glorious page of whose history is that which tells of her adherents who allowed themselves to be martyrs for refusing to condone the worship of the Roman emperor, permits her adherents in Japan actually to worship at the shrine of the sun-goddess in Ise and to address that goddess with the petition, the opening words of which are: "Prosper and favor the reign of the Emperor . . . as Manifest *Kami* (divinity)." Despite the fact that two Catholic bishops, one in 1918 and another in 1931 emphatically condemned the worship at the Shinto shrines as idolatry and as contrary to Christian religion, "the office of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fidei at Rome, after a review of the entire problem by the College of Cardinals, directed the Catholic believers in Japan to accept the official definition of the non-religious nature of state Shinto and comply with governmental requirements in the matter of participation in the shrine ceremonies." No wonder many an authoritative spokesman of the Christian Church in Japan has found little difficulty in equating Christianity with Nipponism and the Kingdom of God on earth with the establishment of the New Order in East Asia.

No one who wants to have an understanding of how much is involved in a peace settlement that will afford mankind some degree of escurity beside mere adjustments of boundary lines and economic interests can afford to miss reading this book. He will realize that, as long as men glorify political might and deify the state, there is no hope for the human race. Here then we have an ultimate criterion for righteousness and true religion: Whatever juridical law, ethical principle or religious teaching condones or abets the glorification of political might and the deification of the state should be resisted to the death by all who want to worship God in truth. There can be no worthier martyrdom.

Mordecai M. Kaplan

Correspondence

Negro-Jewish Relations in Harlem

Sirs:

Quite by chance—it came to our office from a social work agency—I read your April 16 issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Besides the fact that I am a Negro interested in the equality of minorities —from every standpoint—I am carrying on a one-man crusade in Harlem to eradicate the anti-Semitic propaganda that is eating its way into the minds and thinking of my people there. The "ills" of my people are being blamed on the Jews who are there doing their very best to "stay above water" economically. True there are some Jews who are careless in their handling of Negroes—rough, cheating, etc. You know only too well what I mean. But, what with the usual run of mystery that point rationing, etc., carries for the "slow to think," these people need, and merit understanding and patience.

Can you see what this sort of thing does to their mind?

My suggestion is that in order to stop this feeling that *this* is wrong because the Jew is here, and *that* is wrnog because he is a Jew, felt by the Negro in Harlem, a program of education should be done by you—or your representatives there, in collaboration with the business men there. This sounds complicated—but to one who is versed in this sort of thing I'm sure you can see its great possibilities.

May I have your reaction to same—as well as suggestions?

VIOLA LEWIS-SCOTT.

Sniping at Community Efforts in Jewish Education

(Continued from Page 5)

clearly understood: that if, in the field of Jewish education, it is impossible to establish diversity within unity, the whole endeavor to create a Jewish organic community in America must fail. For education is the very process by which each generation adjusts itself to a continuing pattern of social life.

Consequently those who, like Dr. Halpern and ourselves no less, approve of an intensive Hebraic education should utilize to the full the services of the Jewish Education Committee or similar Jewish communal agencies in developing more intensive forms of Jewish education. But they have no right to find fault with the Jewish Education Committee for aiding the "Commission on New Approaches," for example, to publicize its own program of Jewish education, particularly since the Committee expressly dissociated itself from the views expressed in the Commission's report. To attack the Committee on that score is not to attack the Committee alone; it is to attack the entire project of raising Jewish education from the slough into which it has fallen and elevating it to the height of a major Jewish communal responsibility.

The fanaticism which cannot see the wisdom of tolerating even inadequate educational programs in the interest of enhancing the prestige of Jewish education in general defeats its own end. If the efforts of the Jewish Education Committee and the bureaus of Jewish education in other cities were to be sabotaged because of such intolerance, those elements in the Jewish population who are content with a minimal Jewish education would lose relatively little thereby, for they have invested little; but the advocates of a maximalist program would lose heavily. Their efforts would be doomed to futility because, by breaking up the community project, they would have exempted those Jews who are financially best able to support an intensive Jewish education from all responsibility for doing so, except for the negligible number among them who may themselves be zealots for Hebrew culture.

We therefore plead earnestly with all protagonists of an intensive Jewish education that they call a halt to destructive polemics, and address themselves instead to improving the educational standards of their own schools, which have certainly not yet arrived at perfection. Who knows? Perhaps if they approached the problem in a more humble and cooperative spirit, they might even learn something from those Jewish educators against whom they hurl their most bitter invectives.

Realities and Values

(Continued from Page 7)

against an increase of anti-Semitism in America after the war. Recognizing that anti-Semitism is a psychosis and that, judging by past experience, this psychosis manifests itself as part of the psychic maladjustments which accompany the transition from a war-time to a peace-time society, Hans Lamm urges that the American Jewish Conference take steps now to counteract post-war anti-Semitism. To deal with it adequately, he maintains, requires a new approach to the problem which is very different from the programs of anti-defamation and inter-faith goodwill now extant. These programs assume anti-Semites to be rational human beings capable of responding to an appeal to reason and fairness. The truth, however, is that anti-Semitism is a pathologic phenomenon needing a psychiatric approach. He therefore recommends, and we approve the recommendation, that a commission be appointed to study new psychological and sociological approaches to the problem of combatting anti-Semitism.